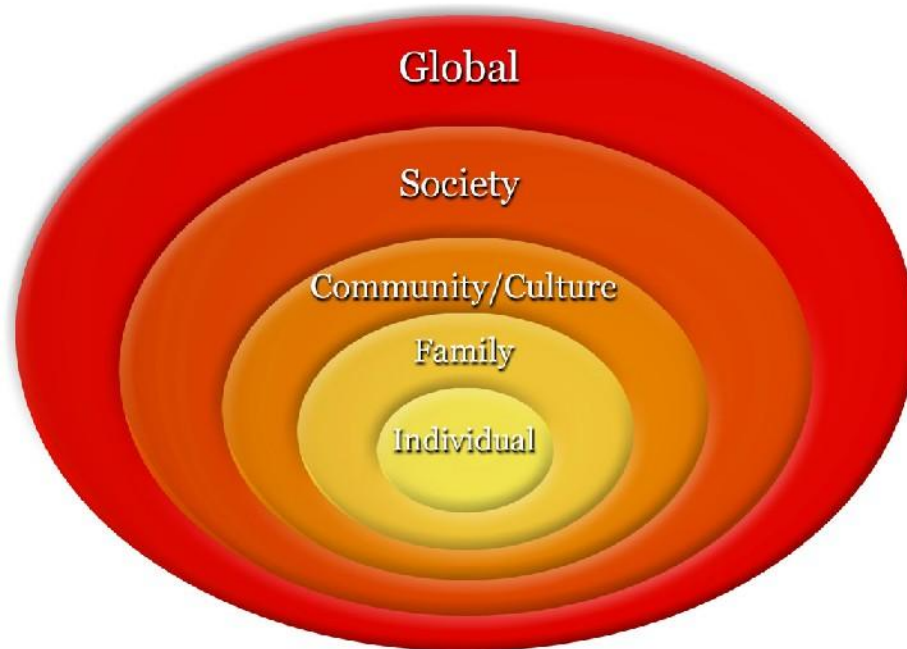


## The Ecology of Human Development Dictates Program Integration

At first glance, rural youth development programs may seem to be disconnected, fragmented, and disparate. However, the issues facing families are complex and therefore, need complex systemic solutions. Added to the complexity of issues are the ever changing dynamics, communications, and interconnectedness of individuals with all of the elements of society.

Uri Bronfenbrenner, among the world's best-known psychologists, worked on defining what really matters in the development of human beings for over 60 years. His model of the ecology of human development (shown below) acknowledges that humans don't develop in isolation, but in relation to their family and home, school, community and society. Each of these ever-changing and multilevel environments, as well as interactions among these environments, is key to development.



*Model from Huitt, W. (1997, 1999, 2005, & 2009). Educational Psychology Interactive. <http://chiron.valdosta.edu/whuitt/materials/sysmdlc.html>. Retrieved June 23, 2009.*

Bronfenbrenner's work views the psychology, sociology, culture, and economics of human development as nested settings in which a person develops over time throughout the life course.

It is this theoretical framework that provides the big picture of how the rural youth development programs work together to contribute to the development of youth, families, and communities.